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Introduction to Hypnosis

Hypnosis is a psychological state characterized by focused attention, increased suggestibility, and heightened imagination. It is often induced by a trained professional, known as a hypnotist or hypnotherapist, and involves guiding an individual into a state of deep relaxation and concentration.

During hypnosis, individuals enter a trance-like state where their attention is highly focused, and they become more responsive to suggestions. Contrary to popular belief, hypnosis is not a form of sleep or unconsciousness. Instead, it can be described as a state of heightened awareness and concentration on a specific idea or experience.

Hypnosis typically involves several stages:

1. **Induction:** This stage aims to relax the individual and help them enter a trance state. The hypnotist may use various techniques such as progressive relaxation, guided imagery, or breathing exercises to induce a state of deep relaxation.
2. **Deepening:** Once the individual is relaxed, the hypnotist may further deepen the hypnotic state by using techniques like counting backward, providing soothing suggestions, or utilizing visualizations.
3. **Suggestion:** In this stage, the hypnotist presents specific suggestions to the individual's subconscious mind. These suggestions can be tailored to address specific goals or issues, such as quitting smoking, reducing anxiety, or improving confidence. The individual's heightened suggestibility during hypnosis makes them more receptive to these suggestions.
4. **Termination:** The final stage involves bringing the individual out of the hypnotic state. The hypnotist may count upward, provide gentle

suggestions of awakening, or simply inform the individual that the session is coming to an end.

Hypnosis works by bypassing the critical conscious mind and accessing the subconscious mind, which is more open to suggestion. The subconscious mind is responsible for automatic behaviors, emotions, and habits. By accessing this part of the mind, hypnotic suggestions can help individuals reframe their thoughts, beliefs, and behaviors.

The exact mechanisms by which hypnosis works are not fully understood. However, several theories have been proposed. One theory suggests that hypnosis activates the brain's executive control systems, allowing for increased focus and decreased awareness of external distractions. Another theory proposes that hypnosis works by creating a dissociated state in which the conscious mind is temporarily separated from certain thoughts or sensations.

It's important to note that not everyone is equally susceptible to hypnosis. Some individuals are more responsive to hypnosis due to factors such as their level of relaxation, trust in the hypnotist, and ability to engage in imaginative experiences. However, even individuals with low hypnotic susceptibility can benefit from hypnotherapy techniques.

Hypnosis has been used in various therapeutic contexts, including smoking cessation, weight management, pain management, phobia treatment, and stress reduction. It is also utilized in entertainment and stage shows, where volunteers are hypnotized to perform amusing or entertaining acts.

It is crucial to practice hypnosis under the guidance of a trained and ethical professional. Hypnosis should not be used as a substitute for medical or psychological treatment but can be a complementary approach when used in conjunction with appropriate therapies.

Hypnosis, when viewed from the perspective of Psychology and Psychoanalysis, can be understood as a method to access and influence the subconscious mind. It involves inducing a trance-like state in an individual, allowing for increased suggestibility and the exploration of deeper levels of consciousness.

From a psychological standpoint, hypnosis is often associated with the theories of Sigmund Freud and his concept of the unconscious mind. Freud believed that the unconscious mind contains repressed thoughts, desires, and memories that influence our behavior and emotions. Hypnosis was seen as a tool to access these hidden aspects of the mind and bring them into conscious awareness.

According to Freud, hypnosis can create a state of heightened susceptibility to suggestion, enabling the therapist to bypass conscious resistance and directly access the unconscious material. Through this process, unresolved conflicts, traumatic experiences, or repressed memories could be brought to light, leading to insight and potential therapeutic healing. Freud's use of hypnosis, however, was later replaced by his psychoanalytic method, which relied more on free association, dream analysis, and the interpretation of unconscious symbols.

Nonetheless, hypnosis continued to be explored and used by other psychologists and psychoanalysts. In the context of psychoanalysis, hypnosis can be seen as a form of regression therapy. Regression refers to the process of revisiting earlier stages of development or past experiences to gain a deeper understanding of one's current psychological difficulties. By inducing a trance state, the individual may be able to access memories, emotions, and experiences from their past that are otherwise difficult to retrieve consciously.

Furthermore, hypnosis can facilitate the process of suggestion and posthypnotic suggestion, which involves implanting specific ideas or instructions into the individual's subconscious mind. This can be

particularly useful in assisting individuals in overcoming various psychological challenges, such as breaking unwanted habits, managing anxiety, or improving self-esteem.

From a broader psychological perspective, hypnosis can be seen as a state of focused attention and heightened suggestibility. It is thought to involve alterations in brain activity, with changes in neural processes related to attention, perception, and suggestibility. The exact neurobiological mechanisms underlying hypnosis are still being explored but may involve a modulation of the default mode network and the frontal cortex.

It is worth noting that hypnosis does not grant the hypnotist complete control over an individual's mind. The person being hypnotized remains an active participant and can choose to accept or reject suggestions. Furthermore, not everyone is equally susceptible to hypnosis, and individual differences in hypnotic responsiveness can vary significantly.

Hypnosis in psychology and psychoanalysis is a technique that aims to access the subconscious mind, facilitate regression, and utilize suggestion to address psychological difficulties. While the specific mechanisms and effectiveness of hypnosis are still subjects of ongoing research, it remains a valuable tool in therapeutic practice for exploring and influencing the deeper aspects of human consciousness.

History of Hypnosis:

The history of hypnosis is a fascinating journey that spans several centuries. It has roots in ancient healing practices and religious rituals and has evolved through various stages of scientific and medical exploration. Let's delve into the detailed history of hypnosis:

Ancient and Pre-modern Times:

- The origins of hypnosis can be traced back to ancient civilizations such as Egypt, Greece, China, and India. These cultures employed trance-like states, rituals, and suggestive techniques for healing and spiritual purposes.

- In ancient Egypt, sleep temples were established where individuals would seek healing through induced states of altered consciousness.

- The ancient Greeks had oracles and healing centers where priests and healers would induce trance states to offer guidance or treat ailments.

- In India, the Vedas, ancient texts dating back thousands of years, describe techniques for inducing states of focused attention and altered consciousness.

18th Century:

- The modern history of hypnosis started to take shape in the 18th century with the work of Franz Mesmer, an Austrian physician. Mesmer developed a theory called "animal magnetism" or "mesmerism" and believed that an invisible fluid flowed within the body, causing disease when blocked.

- Mesmer used techniques such as hand gestures, passes, and magnetized objects to induce a trance-like state in his patients and alleviate their symptoms.

- Mesmer's practices gained popularity, but he faced controversy and skepticism from the medical establishment. His methods were eventually discredited, but his work laid the foundation for future understandings of hypnosis.

19th Century:

- James Braid, a Scottish surgeon, played a pivotal role in the scientific study and redefinition of hypnosis in the 19th century.

- Braid rejected Mesmer's theories of magnetic fluids and proposed that hypnosis was a unique psychological state induced by physiological and psychological factors.
- Braid coined the term "hypnosis" from the Greek word "hypnos," meaning sleep, to describe the trance-like state induced by suggestion and fixation of attention.
- Braid's work shifted the understanding of hypnosis from a mystical or spiritual phenomenon to a psychological one.

Late 19th to Early 20th Century:

- The late 19th and early 20th centuries witnessed significant advancements in the study and application of hypnosis.
- French neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot used hypnosis in the treatment of hysteria and played a key role in influencing other prominent figures, including Sigmund Freud.
- Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis, initially used hypnosis in his therapeutic practice but later shifted to other methods such as free association and dream analysis.
- Freud's exploration of the unconscious mind and his emphasis on repressed memories and desires contributed to the understanding of hypnosis as a tool for accessing the subconscious.

20th Century:

- In the 20th century, hypnosis gained recognition as a legitimate field of study and application.
- The British Medical Association endorsed the use of hypnosis in 1955, leading to increased acceptance and integration into medical and psychological practices.

- Milton H. Erickson, an American psychiatrist, made significant contributions to the field with his innovative techniques, indirect suggestions, and utilization of the unconscious mind.
- Hypnosis became widely utilized in various therapeutic contexts, including pain management, phobia treatment, smoking cessation, and stress reduction.

Contemporary Era:

- Hypnosis continues to be studied and utilized in modern times, with ongoing research exploring its mechanisms and effectiveness.
- Professional organizations, such as the American Society of Clinical Hypnosis and the British Society of Clinical Hypnosis, provide training and certification for practitioners.
- Hypnotherapy has become an established practice, often integrated with other therapeutic approaches, and is used to address a wide range of psychological and behavioral issues.

The history of hypnosis reflects a progression from ancient rituals and beliefs to a scientific understanding of the psychological and physiological processes involved. The study and practice of hypnosis have evolved and expanded, contributing to its recognition as a valuable tool in therapeutic and medical contexts.

Several celebrities have reportedly used hypnosis for various reasons, including personal development, performance enhancement, stress management, and overcoming specific challenges. While it's important to note that individual experiences and outcomes may vary. It's worth noting that while these celebrities have shared their experiences with hypnosis, their individual results and the extent of their involvement may vary. Hypnosis is a personal and subjective experience, and its effectiveness can depend on various factors,

including the individual's receptiveness, goals, and the expertise of the hypnotherapist.

Hypnosis is studied and researched by various scientific, academic, and research centers around the world. These institutions aim to explore the mechanisms, applications, and effectiveness of hypnosis, as well as its integration with other therapeutic approaches.

1. **Stanford University Center for Hypnosis:** Located at Stanford University in the United States, this center focuses on the scientific investigation of hypnosis. It conducts research on the neural correlates of hypnosis, hypnotic suggestion, and its applications in various fields.
2. **Harvard Medical School - Division of Behavioral Medicine:** The Division of Behavioral Medicine at Harvard Medical School conducts research on hypnosis and its applications in areas such as pain management, anxiety disorders, and psychosomatic medicine. They explore the neurobiology of hypnosis and investigate its mechanisms and effectiveness.
3. **University College London (UCL) Hypnosis and Psychosomatic Medicine Group:** UCL's research group focuses on the study of hypnosis, psychosomatic medicine, and mind-body interactions. They investigate the use of hypnosis in areas such as pain management, dermatology, and oncology.
4. **Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology & Neuroscience, King's College London:** This renowned institute conducts research on various aspects of hypnosis, including its neural mechanisms, applications in mental health, and its integration with psychotherapy. They explore the use of hypnosis in treating conditions such as depression, anxiety, and addiction.
5. **British Society of Clinical Hypnosis (BSCH):** The BSCH is an organization that promotes the use of hypnosis in clinical practice.

While not a research center itself, it provides resources and facilitates collaboration among hypnotherapists, psychologists, and medical professionals interested in the scientific study and practice of hypnosis.

6. American Society of Clinical Hypnosis (ASCH): Similar to the BSCH, the ASCH is an organization dedicated to advancing the understanding and clinical applications of hypnosis. They provide training, support research initiatives, and promote evidence-based practice in clinical hypnosis.

These are just a few examples of the many institutions and organizations worldwide that are actively involved in hypnosis research. It's worth noting that hypnosis research is interdisciplinary and can be conducted in collaboration with universities, medical centers, and psychological organizations in various countries.